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Sandra McCormick  
*Ohio State University*

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# A READING LESSON CHECKLIST FOR THE PRINCIPAL

**Sandra McCormick**

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

The checklist presented below is a follow-up to the article in the last issue of *Reading Horizons* entitled "Assistance for the School Principal: Evaluate Classroom Reading Programs." The checklist is designed to provide additional assistance to the elementary school principal.

The checklist is easy to use and therefore will save the administrator time. In addition, since it presents objective information which can be discussed with teachers after classroom observations, the checklist could be used by reading supervisors as well.

The checklist consists of three sections. Part I of the checklist assesses those activities or situations which should exist every time group reading instruction occurs. Areas to be evaluated include both those procedural aspects of classroom management which precede or make possible good instruction, and those situations which reflect a teacher's knowledge of basic concepts underlying good reading instruction in general.

Part II lists good teaching procedures that should occur when a basal reader approach to reading instruction is implemented correctly. Although many types of reading programs are currently being used nationwide, the basal reader approach to reading instruction continues to be most prevalent. For this reason, the checklist was prepared for use in evaluating classroom programs using a basal reader approach, but it may be modified for use with other types of programs.

Part III of the checklist contains only one item – an important item that should be carried out periodically in a high quality reading program.

Although the following information and checklist are for use when the teacher is using a basal reader approach to teaching reading, it should be noted that within this approach procedures may vary. This checklist represents generally accepted methods for accomplishing the purposes of such a program.

Parts I, II, and III of the checklist may be read by the principal before entering a classroom in order to be prepared to take note of information required by each item. In some cases, the administrator may use the checklist while in the classroom rather than completing it following the observation. Some items can be answered by discussion with the teacher but for most items direct observation is preferable.

No numerical scoring criteria is used. Instead, a simple checking of a "Yes" or "No" answer is all that is required. The administrator is strongly advised to use the completed checklist as a focus for discussion in a conference with the teacher following the observation.

## Part I

1. Does the teacher have the class divided into small ability, skills, or interest groups for reading instruction?  
Yes\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ No\_ \_ \_ \_ \_
2. Has the teacher planned for worthwhile activities, that is, activities which do promote academic learning for students who will not be participating in the reading group? (Example: Coloring a picture of a squirrel on a dittoed worksheet would provide less input to academic learning than reading a short, easy, interesting library book.)  
Yes\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ No\_ \_ \_ \_ \_
3. Has the teacher given sufficient direction to students who will not be participating in the reading group so as to minimize interruptions?  
Yes\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ No\_ \_ \_ \_ \_
4. In order to waste little time and to minimize interruptions, does the teacher have an organized set of procedures so that students know exactly what they should bring to the reading group, what they should do upon arriving there, etc.?  
Yes\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ No\_ \_ \_ \_ \_
5. Are the teacher and students in the reading group seated near a chalk-board or chart paper so that these may be used during explanations or exercises?  
Yes\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ No\_ \_ \_ \_ \_
6. Does the teacher have the attention of all the students in the group?  
Yes\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ No\_ \_ \_ \_ \_
7. Does the teacher seem to have the students reading material that is at the correct instructional level for those students?  
Yes\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ No\_ \_ \_ \_ \_
8. Is the teacher having the students read material that seems to be of the correct interest level for the students in the group? (Example: Reading a story about a new swing set may be less interesting to sixth grade boys than a story about baseball.)  
Yes\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ No\_ \_ \_ \_ \_
9. Does the teacher insist that other students give a student who has been called upon time to think, and to answer, without shouting out responses themselves?  
Yes\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ No\_ \_ \_ \_ \_
10. Does the teacher give kind, constructive help when a student is having difficulty?  
Yes\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ No\_ \_ \_ \_ \_
11. Does the teacher give praise to good work?  
Yes\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ No\_ \_ \_ \_ \_
12. Does the teacher provide objective feedback to students on their progress? (Example: Use of charts and graphs that are seen only by that student and the teacher.)  
Yes\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ No\_ \_ \_ \_ \_

13. Does the teacher provide for reading instruction for his/her students everyday?  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
14. In grades one and two, does the teacher provide for two reading sessions each day for students in the lowest reading group?  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

## Part II

### Teaching Procedures that Should Occur When A Basal Reader Approach is Being Used

To teach a thorough reading lesson, it is usually necessary to work with the students for more than one session. Therefore, a teacher may not be following all of these procedures in one session. It is not possible to predetermine how many of the procedures would occur in any given lesson since this will depend upon time, the lesson objectives, and the students. Over a period of two to three days most of these activities should take place.

1. Does the teacher take a few minutes to prepare the students before having them read a story?  
(Examples:  
a. Setting a purpose for reading, such as "Read to find out why Tom lost his snake on the bus."  
b. Presenting background, such as using a map to locate the setting of the story.)  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
2. Does silent reading precede oral reading?  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
3. Does the teacher ask the students questions about what has been read?  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
4. Do the questions asked include all levels of questions, i.e., literal, interpretive, and evaluative and creative?  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
5. As an aid in assessing some aspects of student's growth in reading, does the teacher frequently provide for oral re-reading of the story or of selected parts of the story?  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
6. Is guided practice given to promote recognition of new words introduced in the story?  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
7. Is guided practice given in the use of decoding skills and strategies such as phonetic analysis, structural analysis, and use of context clues?  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_
8. Does the teacher periodically provide for work with word meanings either through incidental discussion when necessary or through structured lessons?  
Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

9. Does the teacher periodically provide practice in various needed areas of comprehension?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
10. Were other types of reading skills or understandings taught during this lesson? (For example, the teacher might teach lessons on reference skills, literary understandings, etc.)  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
11. If the teacher has noted specific weaknesses in a group or with a specific student, does the teacher include planned activities in that area as a part of the lesson on some days, either for the group or for individuals?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
12. Does the teacher discuss with the students, or occasionally check individually, any work that had been previously assigned for the students to complete independently?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
13. Does the teacher assign follow-up activities for students to carry out independently that will provide reinforcement of newly learned skills, strategies, or concepts?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
14. When assigning seatwork, does the teacher discuss one or two examples with the students before expecting them to complete the work independently?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

### Part III

#### Formal Assessment Activities

The following procedures should be carried out periodically:

1. Does the teacher test students when they have completed materials at each reading level in order to (a) determine if the students are ready to progress to the next level; (b) determine areas of weakness for a group or for individual students in order to plan future instructions?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_